

Customer Satisfaction Survey Report, FY 2004

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FY 2004 Customer Satisfaction Survey

1.0 Executive Summary

The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) produces timely, comprehensive, and accurate economic data, and its activities are essential to policymakers, financial markets, and the general public. Customer service is a fundamental component of BEA's mission. BEA's first strategic objective is to "Make BEA's economic accounts and services more responsive to the needs of its customers and partners."¹ The annual *Customer Satisfaction Survey* assists BEA in meeting this objective by providing feedback from customers on how BEA can improve its products and services. In addition, the survey serves as one of the seven measures used to hold BEA accountable for its performance.

The *FY 2004 Customer Satisfaction Survey* was conducted in June 2004 and, as in each previous survey, BEA received outstanding marks concerning satisfaction with the overall quality of its products and services. When asked how satisfied they were with the overall quality of the BEA products and services, ***respondents rated BEA's products and services 4.3 on a 5-point scale***. While the key indicator for the survey remains the overall customer satisfaction measure, this report details all results of the *FY 2004 Customer Satisfaction Survey*.

Results of the survey are vital to BEA as they are used to refine daily operations and guide future development efforts. Key findings from the fiscal year (FY) 2004 survey indicate that BEA's customers want the following:

1. Improvements in the timeliness of data

BEA is working to improve the timeliness and relevance of its data by:

- Accelerating the release of quarterly state personal income by one month, bringing the release of those data to within 3 months of the end of the reference quarter;
- Accelerating the release of the annual input-output accounts by 18 months, down from 3 years, greatly enhancing their relevance;
- Conducting pilot quarterly surveys of U.S. trade in services to provide expanded coverage of large and volatile services, which previously were surveyed only annually; and
- Planning accelerations in FY 2005 for metropolitan area personal income by 8 months, gross state product by 13 months, county personal income estimates by 7 months, and GDP estimates by 2 weeks.

2. More documentation of source data and methods

BEA has illustrated its commitment to providing the most relevant and accurate data by:

- Creating new, much more up-to-date measures of insurance services, along with revising the 300-table presentation of the GDP accounts;
- Instituting statistical sampling from the mandatory annual survey of foreign direct investment in the United States, which will maintain statistical accuracy while reducing respondent burden and lowering costs; and
- Establishing more efficient processing systems for integrating the annual input-output accounts with the GDP-by-industry accounts, estimating benchmarks, and improving the reliability of these estimates.

¹From BEA's 2004 *Strategic Plan*, available at: http://www.bea.gov/bea/about/strat_plan_FY04_08.pdf

3. A Web site search engine

In FY 2005, BEA will launch a search engine on its Web site. It combines advanced search capabilities with a “clustering” feature that groups results into logical categories.

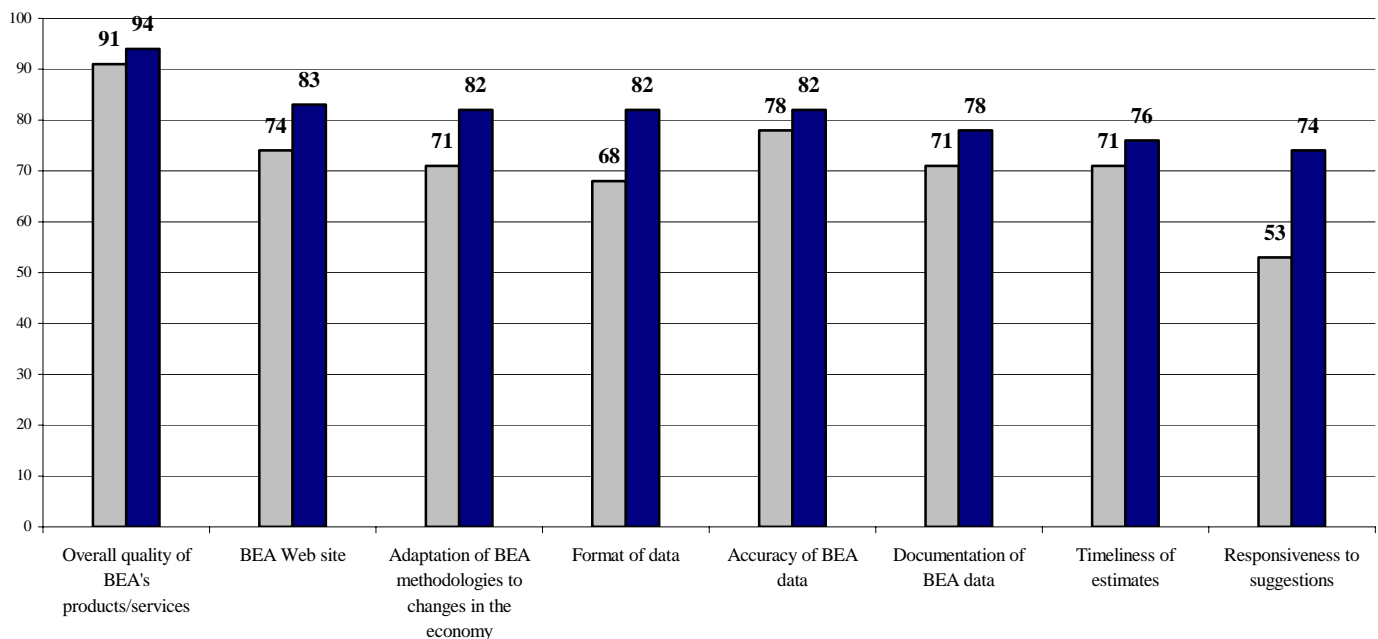
4. An easy-to-use format on the BEA Web site

BEA has upgraded its Web site by:

- Expanding the availability of customized downloads to include the GDP-by-industry accounts;
- Providing a new “Overview of the U.S. Economy” feature that provides fingertip access to key economic indicators. From this feature, customers may also access one-page, plain-language summaries of each news release;
- Tripling the size of its online glossary and adding a working papers section that allows customers to access research papers and analytical presentations prepared by BEA staff; and
- Implementing FY 2005 Web site improvements, including expanding the opportunities to receive customer feedback and launching a new e-mail subscription service for new releases and updates.

BEA has received high scores across key customer satisfaction measures since first conducting the *Customer Satisfaction Survey* in FY 2000. Most notable increases in user satisfaction from FY 2000 to FY 2004 occurred areas identified in the chart below.

**Chart 1. Comparison of Key Customer Satisfaction Measures,
FY 2000 and 2004**
(Percent 'Satisfied' or 'Very Satisfied')



BEA's economic accounts continue to set the standard for the world. This standing is due in part to BEA's commitment to customer service. BEA will continue to use the *Customer Satisfaction Survey* to ascertain the needs of its customers and to incorporate the survey's results into both new and evolving initiatives.

2.0 Background

In June 2004, BEA conducted its fourth *Customer Satisfaction Survey*. This survey provides customer feedback that allows BEA to evaluate its past performance and better tailor its products and services to meet customer needs. The survey was previously conducted in fiscal years 2000, 2002, and 2003. Initially the survey was conceived of as an assessment to be conducted every other year. Following 2001, the decision was made to conduct it annually.

BEA mails customer satisfaction surveys to subscribers of the SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS, to customers who have ordered BEA products (such as CD-ROMs, diskettes, and printouts), and to members of data user groups. These recipients represent the range of BEA's customers, including Federal Government agencies, Federal policy makers, the business community, academia, and the general public. BEA also makes the survey available on its Web site.

Since FY 2000, the survey has been a means for determining the level of customer satisfaction with BEA, its products, and services. The survey provides feedback in the areas of customer satisfaction, data products used, and Web site features.

BEA mailed the *FY 2004 Customer Satisfaction Survey* to more than 5,000 customers. Customers also completed the survey on BEA's Web site. BEA received 391 mailed responses and 72 online responses, totaling 463 responses. This was slightly less than the response rate in FY 2003, when BEA received 448 responses by mail and 88 online responses.

Key themes emerging from FY 2004 customer comments were the need for:

- more timely data
- more documentation of source data and methods
- a Web site search engine
- an easy-to-use format on the Web site
- additional historical data
- online tutorials to aid customers in finding data
- conferences explaining BEA's data in more detail

General feedback received from the survey will guide improvement efforts in FY 2005.

2.1 Survey Structure

The FY 2004 survey held the same overall format and questions from previous years. The data products section included questions about the use of general products, as well as the use of specific industry, international, national, and regional products. The customer satisfaction section included ten specific questions that targeted key areas of BEA's products and services. The Web site section explored four questions about the importance of specific Web site features. Respondents also provided written comments and suggestions about areas for improvement in BEA products and services.

2.2 Arriving at the Customer Satisfaction Measure

BEA regards the overall customer satisfaction measure as the key indicator of the survey. This measure is based principally on responses to the question, “How satisfied are you with the overall quality of the BEA products/services?” Ultimately, the rating is determined by the total amount of rating points received (on a scale of 1–5) from respondents and is divided by the total number of respondents who provided a rating on this question.

For FY 2004, the total number of rating points was 1,898 and the total number of respondents was 437. Using the rating calculation, the overall customer satisfaction level in FY 2004 was 4.3—the same customer satisfaction level in both FY 2002 and FY 2000. The level in FY 2003 was 4.4. For FY 2004, 2003, and 2002, both mail and online survey responses were included. Mailed survey responses only were used in FY 2000.

3.0 Results

For the purpose of comparison, this section focuses on the FY 2004 and FY 2003 survey results. Results from surveys conducted in FY 2002 and FY 2000 are also included for background.

3.1 Customer Satisfaction Dimensions

In addition to the key customer satisfaction question noted in section 2.2, customers were asked nine questions about BEA service. The most noticeable changes from FY 2003 to FY 2004 were increases in how satisfied customers are with BEA's adaptive methodologies, with its Web site, and with its responsiveness to suggestions. Among survey respondents who expressed opinions on specific questions, key findings were:

- *Satisfaction with the adaptation of BEA's methodologies to changes in the economy increased by five percentage points to 82% in FY 2004;*
- *BEA's responsiveness to suggestions increased 4% in FY 2004, with respondents indicating that 74% were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied;'*
- *Customer perception of the accuracy of BEA data edged up one percentage point in FY 2004 to 82%;*
- *Satisfaction with technological improvements increased by one percentage point, with 83% of respondents indicating they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with BEA's Web site;*
- *Satisfaction with the format (ease of use) of BEA's data remained steady at 82% for both FY 2003 and FY 2004;*
- *Satisfaction with documentation of data dropped slightly to 78% in FY 2004, from 79% in FY 2003;*
- *Customer perception of the courtesy of BEA staff dropped 1%, but remained high, with 85% of respondents indicating they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' in FY 2004; and*
- *Satisfaction with the expertise of BEA staff dropped 2% in FY 2004, but also remained high, with 87% of respondents 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied.'*

These results indicate that BEA's customers continue to have a high level of satisfaction with available products and services.

3.2 Comparison of Findings on Overall Satisfaction

A summary of overall satisfaction findings among BEA's customers—which compares information from customer surveys conducted during fiscal years 2000, 2002, 2003, and 2004—is provided in Table 1. When compared to the responses from FY 2000, the results of the FY 2004 survey show that BEA has improved its scores in every satisfaction measure. Comparison data featuring additional details on the satisfaction measures and increases in each area are provided in table 1.

*Table 1. Comparison of Customer Satisfaction Findings by Fiscal Year**

	<i>Percent of respondents indicating they were 'Satisfied' or 'Very Satisfied'</i>			
	<i>2000</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>
How satisfied are you with the overall quality of the BEA products/ services?	91%	94%	94%	94%
How satisfied are you with the timeliness of BEA estimates?	71%	75%	80%	76%
How satisfied are you with the accuracy of BEA estimates?	78%	84%	81%	82%
How satisfied are you with the adaptation of BEA methodologies to changes in the economy?	71%	76%	77%	82%
How satisfied are you with the format of BEA data?	68%	78%	82%	82%
How satisfied are you with the documentation of BEA data?	71%	79%	79%	78%
How satisfied are you with the courtesy of BEA staff?	83%	88%	86%	85%
How satisfied are you with the expertise of BEA staff?	85%	89%	89%	87%
How satisfied are you with BEA responsiveness to your suggestions?	53%	70%	70%	74%
How satisfied are you with BEA Web site (www.bea.gov)?	74%	79%	82%	83%

* Initially the survey was conceived of as an assessment to be conducted every other year. Following 2001, the decision was made to conduct it annually.

3.3 BEA Data Products

BEA is steadfast in its commitment to provide customers with those products best suited to assist them in understanding the changing economy. The data products section of the *FY 2004 Customer Satisfaction Survey* supplies BEA with information about the most requested data products and how they are accessed. The survey covered five categories of data products: general, industry, international, national, and regional. Among respondents who expressed an opinion, the key findings by data product type are listed below.

General Data Products

General data products consist of the SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS, CD-ROMs, BEA's Web site (www.bea.gov), and access to BEA staff via telephone and e-mail. Of those customers who expressed an opinion, 76% obtain BEA data 'frequently' or 'often' through the Web site—a 3-percent increase from the FY 2003 survey. These results indicate that the redesign of the BEA Web site had a positive impact on the way BEA's customers perceived the site's usefulness. Additionally, BEA's monthly journal, the SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS, was used 'frequently' or 'often' by 53% of respondents.

Industry Data Products

Industry data products consist of gross domestic product by industry, input-output tables, and satellite accounts. In the FY 2004 survey, 44% of respondents indicated usage of gross domestic product by industry data, an increase of 8 percentage points from FY 2003. The *FY 2004 Customer Satisfaction Survey* shows that 27% of customers 'frequently' or 'often' use the input-output tables, up 5 percentage points from FY 2003.

International Data Products

International data products are U.S. international transactions (balance of payments), U.S. exports and imports of private services, U.S. direct investment abroad, foreign direct investment in the U.S., and U.S. international investment position. Of these products, 28% of respondents used the U.S. international transactions (balance of payments) data, a 1-percentage point drop from FY 2003. Use of both the U.S. direct investments abroad and the foreign direct investment in the U.S. data increased by 5% in FY 2004.

National Data Products

National data products consist of national income and product accounts (NIPAs), which include the gross domestic product (GDP), NIPA underlying detail data, and capital stock (wealth) and investment by industry. In FY 2004, 61% of respondents cited 'frequent' or 'often' use of the GDP data, a drop of 3 percentage points from FY 2003. The capital stock (wealth) and investment by industry data use increased by 2 percentage points—from 24% in FY 2003 to 26% in FY 2004.

Regional Data Products

Regional data products consist of state personal income (SPI), local area personal income, gross state product, and RIMS II regional multipliers; 62% of the respondents used the SPI data, an increase of 7 percentage points from FY 2003. Use of the RIMS II data increased from 16% in FY 2003 to 29% in FY 2004—an increase of 13 percentage points.

3.4 Web Site Features

In the Web site section of the *FY 2004 Customer Satisfaction Survey*, BEA sought customers' opinions about the relative importance of key Web site features and online data products and services. For the fourth year in a row, respondents reported the feature of greatest importance as 'selective access'—the ability to select a specific data set by series, by time period, and by frequency. The second most important feature was listed as 'downloadable data' or data on the Web site that can be downloaded by customers to their personal computers. The importance of 'online documentation' was also cited.

Each of the four key Web site features received a customer importance rating (important or very important) of 80% or higher. Specifically, results for three features (selective access, online documentation, and downloadable data) increased in importance from FY 2003, while the fourth feature (keyword search) declined in importance by just 1%.

Based on feedback received from customers in the FY 2003 survey, BEA's Web site was enhanced in FY 2004. These upgrades included the following:

- expansion of interactive data access to include the GDP-by-industry accounts
- enhanced viewing capabilities within the interactive balance-of-payments accounts feature
- improvements that allow customers to tailor data on the input-output accounts
- the addition of one-page, plain-language summaries of BEA's news releases
- an enhanced "Overview of the U.S. Economy" page featuring downloadable graphs and links to news releases and highlights for nine economic indicators

Taken together, these features offer BEA customers more effective, powerful, and user-friendly tools to aid them in their analysis of the U.S. economy. Survey results suggest a successful redesign, as respondents' opinions about BEA's performance increased (as noted in section 3.1). A comparison of importance of Web site features for fiscal years 2000, 2002, 2003, and 2004 is presented in table 2.

Table 2. Importance of BEA Web Site Features to Customers, by Fiscal Year*

	<i>Percent of respondents indicating feature was 'Important' or 'Very Important'</i>			
	<i>2000</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>
Selective Access: Ability to select specific data sets	94%	94%	93%	96%
Keyword Search: Ability to search BEA's Web site via keywords	78%	79%	81%	80%
Online Documentation	85%	86%	80%	86%
Downloadable Data: Ability to download series directly into spreadsheet software	94%	93%	89%	93%

* Initially the survey was conceived of as an assessment to be conducted every other year. Following 2001, the decision was made to conduct it annually.

3.5 Customer Comments

As a part of BEA's interest in obtaining multiple types of customer feedback, survey respondents were invited to offer their comments and suggestions. In FY 2004, 34% of respondents provided comments, compared with 33% in FY 2003, 38% in FY 2002, and 42% in FY 2000. Again this year, an overwhelming number of comments addressed the electronic dissemination of data.

Key comments emerging from customer comments in FY 2004 were the need for:

- more timely data
- more documentation of source data and methods
- the need for a search engine on BEA's Web site
- an easy-to-use format on the Web site
- additional historical data
- online tutorials to assist customers in finding the data
- conferences explaining BEA's data in more detail

These comments provide a road map for improving both the content of BEA products and the delivery of BEA services.

4.0 Next Steps

The *FY 2004 Customer Satisfaction Survey* provides critical details about BEA's performance. As was the case with surveys conducted in previous fiscal years, BEA's customers have indicated that they are satisfied overall with our products and services.

The FY 2004 survey has also pointed out ways in which BEA can improve, and BEA is determined to address these product- and service-specific areas. BEA's first strategic objective is to make its economic accounts and services more responsive to the needs of its customers and partners. To this end, the findings of the FY 2004 survey will continue to be an important factor in BEA's strategic plans and future goals. This report will be widely disseminated to BEA management and will serve as a guide to planning customer service improvements for FY 2005.

APPENDIX

Bureau of Economic Analysis

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

1. Which data products do you use?

	Frequently (every week)	Often (every month)	Infrequently	Rarely	Never	Don't know or not applicable
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(On a scale of 1–5, please circle the appropriate answer.)

GENERAL DATA PRODUCTS

Survey of Current Business	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
CD-ROMs	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
BEA Web site (www.bea.gov).	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
STAT-USA Web site (www.stat-usa.gov).	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Telephone access to staff.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
E-Mail access to staff	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

INDUSTRY DATA PRODUCTS

Gross Product by Industry.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Input-Output Tables	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Satellite Accounts	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

INTERNATIONAL DATA PRODUCTS

U.S. International Transactions (Balance of Payments).	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
U.S. Exports and Imports of Private Services	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
U.S. Direct Investment Abroad.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Foreign Direct Investment in the United States	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
U.S. International Investment Position	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

NATIONAL DATA PRODUCTS

National Income and Product Accounts (GDP).	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
NIPA Underlying Detail Data	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Capital Stock (Wealth) and Investment by Industry	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

REGIONAL DATA PRODUCTS

State Personal Income	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Local Area Personal Income.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Gross State Product by Industry	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
RIMS II Regional Multipliers.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

2. How satisfied are you with:

Very satisfied Satisfied Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied Don't know or not applicable

(On a scale of 1–5, please circle the appropriate answer.)

the overall quality of the BEA products/services? . . .	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
the timeliness of BEA estimates?	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
the accuracy of BEA estimates?	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
the adaptation of BEA's methodologies to changes in the economy?	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
the format (ease of use) of BEA's data?	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
the documentation of BEA's data?	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
the courtesy of BEA staff?	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
the expertise of BEA staff?	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
BEA's responsiveness to your suggestions?	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
BEA's Web site (www.bea.gov)?	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

3. How important are the following Web site features to you:

Very important Important Neither important nor unimportant Unimportant Very unimportant Don't know or not applicable

(On a scale of 1–5, please circle the appropriate answer.)

Selective Access: Ability to select specific data sets (e.g., by series, by time period, by frequency). . . .	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Keyword Search: Ability to search BEA's Web site via keywords	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Online Documentation	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Downloadable Data: Ability to download series directly	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

4. Please give us specific ways in which we could improve our products/services, including our Web site.

Thank you for your participation!

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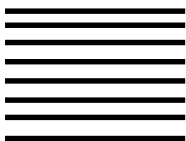
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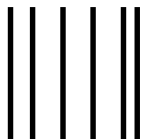


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BUREAU OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS
Washington, D.C. 20230

May 2004

Dear BEA Customer:

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) is committed to providing you the highest-quality products and services. Your participation in our annual customer satisfaction survey will help us achieve that goal.

Based on feedback from past surveys, BEA has made important changes to our products and services to better serve your needs. Some of these changes include:

- Accelerating the release of three key economic measures and proposing to accelerate six additional indicators;
- Improving the accuracy and relevance of BEA statistics through better measures of economic activity;
- Implementing a major redesign of the public Web site (www.bea.gov) to better assist you in finding data;
- Increasing the number of data series available on www.bea.gov to give you more access to economic data; and
- Launching new interactive data tables and mapping features to provide increased flexibility in accessing BEA data.

To continue to make improvements, BEA would appreciate your taking the time to complete this year's survey at www.bea.gov or by using the attached form. Filling it out will take about 15 minutes. Please return the survey within 30 days. All responses are confidential.

Thank you for sharing your comments. I look forward to hearing from you and continuing to respond to your changing needs for data on the U.S. economy.

Sincerely,

J. Steven Landefeld
Director

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